for us to promote public safety, to try to do the right thing for America.

Sometimes people think of them in terms of taking away our freedoms. That is not so. They are out there every day putting their lives on the line to advance our freedoms, to protect our liberties, to protect public safety, to stop terrorism that threatens our government.

So I feel strongly about that. I had the honor to lead some of the finest assistant United States attorneys in America. Our goal—well, before I became an assistant, I was told that Mobile had the best U.S. attorney's office in America.

So when I came back as U.S. attorney some 6 years later, I told them that was our goal. We were going to have the best United States attorney's office in America. What a great time we had. We had wonderful people. They worked nights and weekends to prepare their cases. We went before great Federal judges. It was a glorious time. It was really a special time.

I will never ever forget that. I was before the Judiciary committee in 1986, and Senator Kennedy—later my friend—spoke harshly about me. It was on the TV. They would show his statement. He said I should resign my office. So a few minutes later I had a chance to say something. I said: Senator Kennedy, what you said breaks my heart. Nothing I have ever done have I been more proud of than serving as United States Attorney. I still believe that. Nothing I have ever done am I more proud of than the work we did in that little office in Mobile, AL, representing the United States of America.

You go into court, you stand before the judge, and you say: The United States is ready. I represent the United States of America in a litigation. So this is a big deal. So I would say to you, friends and colleagues, that this is a special honor. I feel it in my bones. I hope and pray I can be worthy of the trust you have given me. I will do my best to do that.

Let me comment a minute on the heated debate we have had here in the Senate on my nomination and others. It was an intense election. There is no doubt about that. There have been strong feelings expressed during the election and throughout this confirmation process. Sometimes we have philosophical disagreements, just sincere disagreements about policy, what is right and what is wrong, what the law says, what it does not say.

I believe words ought to be given their fair and plain meaning. Words are not tools that can be manipulated to make it say what you want it to say. I believe words have objective meanings. So sometimes we have differences about that, but that is what elections are about. I have always liked the debate. I have always enjoyed participating in this great body, where we are free to speak and be able to advocate for the values that we have.

But I don't think we have such a classical disagreement that we can't get together. I have always tried to keep my disagreements from being personal. I have always tried to be courteous to my colleagues. Still, tension is built in the system. It is there. The plain fact is that our Nation does have room for Republicans and Democrats. That is what freedom is all about. I am fairly firm, I have to say, in my convictions, but that does not mean that all of us have to agree on the same thing.

We need latitude in our relationships. So let's agree on what we can agree on, and I suggest that to my colleagues as I leave here, and take action where we can agree on things, but denigrating people whom you disagree with I think is not a healthy trend for our body.

After I had been here for a number of years, I had gotten along pretty well with Senator Kennedy on the Judiciary Committee. He asked me to be the lead sponsor with him on the significant, pretty controversial bill to eliminate prison rape. There were a number of honorable people who opposed it, some friends of mine. He said: I want to do this with you. People asked me: Did you ever have a reconciliation? Did he apologize?

He said: I want to do this bill with you. And I knew what that meant. I appreciated that. I said: I want to do this bill with you. And so we were able to pass that bill together. It was a moment of reconciliation that meant a lot to me. I think he appreciated it too. We later got involved in another major piece of legislation, just the two of us, that would have established a portable savings plan for young workers like the Federal thrift plan.

About that time, the financial crisis hit, and then he became ill and it never came to fruition. But reconciliation is important. We ought to do that in this body. We ought to try to fight for our values and not give an inch. You don't have to back down if you believe you are right, and you should not back down.

But there are ways that we can get along personally. I would say that would be my prayer for this body; that in the future maybe the intensity of the last few weeks would die down and maybe somehow we would get along better.

So, colleagues, I can't express how appreciative I am for those of you who stood by me during this difficult time. I could start calling all their names, but it would not be appropriate. I want to say again, I appreciate the President and his confidence in me, and by your vote tonight, I have been given a real challenge. I will do my best to be worthy of it. I look forward to working with each of you during that time and maybe make sure that we have a good open door at the Department of Justice.

My wife has picked up pretty quickly that we have a chef, and we can actually invite people for lunch or breakfast there. Maybe we can do that.

Finally, let me thank my family because without their support, I could not be here. It is great. My children have been so engaged in this. They were young when my 1986 adventure occurred. Now they are grown. Your support and affirmation have meant much to me.

LETTER OF RESIGNATION

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I present to the body my letter of resignation, which I ask unanimous consent be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, February 8, 2017.

The Hon. ROBERT BENTLEY,
Governor of the State of Alabama,
Montgomery, AL.

DEAR GOVERNOR BENTLEY: I hereby give notice that I will retire from the Office of United States Senator for the State of Alabama. Therefore, I tender my resignation at 11:55 pm Eastern Standard Time on February 8, 2017.

Very truly yours,

JEFF SESSIONS,
U.S. Senator.

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you all.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of THOMAS PRICE, of Georgia, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The Senator from Texas.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REFUGEE FAMILIES IN VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, since 1989, Vermont has accepted more than 8,000 refugees from around the world. Most recently, two families from war-torn Syria were placed in Rutland.

Vermonters understand the meaning of community, of supporting one another through tough times and celebrating together in seasons of joy. Over the last three decades, the meaning of community has expanded to include numerous nationalities as Vermonters have welcomed new neighbors from countries including Somalia, Sudan, and Bhutan, among others. Over the last 25 years, Vermont's growing diversity has infused vitality and a diversity of culture into our rural State as locals open their arms—and their hearts—to new cultures and ways of life. New Vermonters hail from the world over

and are greeted in the Green Mountains by support groups and refugee associations. Some organizations aid new arrivals by offering workforce developments and translation services, while others host furniture and clothing drives. Many refugees are able to find jobs in Vermont's bustling tourism industry, as they work to save for future endeavors.

These support networks expand as the same individuals who once relied on refugee organizations begin to offer guidance to others. For some, this means years of saving before opening restaurants or stores with food and products that feature their home countries. Others focus on engaging recently arrived refugees in the very communities that they were welcomed into. As their roots grow deeper and their communities wider, Vermont's cultural vibrancy increases.

At the end of the day, however, these refugees have become part of the fabric of our communities. Vermont has become a home, if not their first home. In an article featured in POLITICO in November 2016, one refugee, Ramadan Bahic, a Bosnian Muslim who fled their Serb-controlled town during the Bosnian civil war said, ''My language is my language, my accent will stay, but if you ask me, I'm a Vermonter.''

To Mr. Bahic and to those refugees recently settled in Vermont—or hope to do so in the future—I say welcome home.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of a November 2016 POLITICO article, ''My Language is My language, But I'm a Vermonter,'' be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

[From POLITICO, Nov. 17, 2016]

'MY LANGUAGE IS MY LANGUAGE, BUT I'M A VERMONTER'

Vermont has accepted thousands of refugees over the years, boosting the population and the economy. A debate over accepting Syrians put the state to the test.

(By Erick Trickey)

BURLINGTON—Eight years ago, Som Timsina's family left a refugee camp in Nepal and became one of the first Bhutanese families to seek sanctuary in Vermont. Timsina drove the Holiday Inn's shuttle on night shifts for three years as he saved to open his own Asian grocery. Five years later, Central Market has become a gathering place for the state's growing population of ethnic Nepali from Bhutan, and its kitchen dishes out Himalayan cuisine that gets raves from locals on Yelp—tikka masala and biryani, plus Nepali momo dumplings.

Timsina, 38, works long, fast-paced days. In a 20 minute chat in his store, he never takes off his black jacket or takes the Bluetooth from his ear. Though business isn't as strong as he'd like, and housing costs in Burlington are high, Vermonters, he says, have offered a welcoming refuge for him and his family—including his father, who was tortured by authorities in Bhutan.

''They react good so far,'' he says of Vermonters. ''They are helping us.''

For decades now, Vermont has welcomed refugees from around the world: more than 8,000 since 1989, just over 1 percent of the small state's population. Vermonters have been almost Canadian in their big-hearted welcome of the displaced and persecuted, primarily from Somalia, Sudan, Central Africa, Bhutan and Bosnia. They're generous donors of furniture and household goods for new arrivals. They've taken Somali refugees into their homes to help them adjust to American life. And their schools have stepped up with English-language classes for kids from abroad. In Vermont, refugee resettlement has enjoyed near-unanimous support from state and local political leaders, who see it as a way to add youth and vigor to the largely rural state's declining population. And for the most part their constituents have agreed. Until this year.

On April 26—the same day Donald Trump swept through seven Republican primaries in the northeast—the mayor of Rutland, southern Vermont's largest town, announced a plan to accept up to 100 war refugees a year, beginning with Syrian families. The reaction was swift. A volunteer group, Rutland Welcomes, organized to prepare for the Syrians' arrival, and at the same time a vocal group bent on halting the resettlement, Rutland First, flooded meetings in the town of 16,000. The ensuing debate, which dragged on through the summer, was a miniature version of the emotionally charged argument that dominated so much of the presidential cycle. But the way Rutland residents responded was quintessentially Vermont: generous and pragmatic. In the end, most residents saw that this was about more than the refugees' well-being. It was about their own as well.

A six-foot-tall teddy bear with a red bowtie rests on a shelf in Vermont Bosna Cutting, Ramadan Bahic's fabric shop. It's a photo op for every kid who visits the business, and a symbol of how Bahic and his wife rebuilt their lives in the Green Mountain State after fleeing Bosnia in 1993. Fashion designers before the war, the Bahics now cut fabric for clients that include the Vermont Teddy Bear Co.

''I can say I'm born here,'' says Bahic, 56, burly and upbeat. ''My language is my language, my accent will stay, but if you ask me, I'm a Vermonter.''

Bahic and his family, all of them Bosnian Muslims, fled their Serb-controlled town during the Bosnian civil war. ''My father was beaten by Serbs,'' Bahic says. ''Both my parents, they were almost killed. We were witnesses, so we were supposed to be killed.'' The Red Cross evacuated them to a refugee camp in Croatia, and after four months, they were resettled in Burlington.

Though Vermont isn't known for its diversity—whites make up 94 percent of its population of 625,000—that's changing. Bahic's new life is a testament to the major role refugees have played in bringing new cultures to Burlington. His parents' funeral services were presided over by an imam from the Islamic Center of Vermont, one of the state's two mosques. Though Bahic leads a mostly secular life—he likes to gamble and drink—he's visited Burlington-area churches to explain Islam. The 15 employees at his business in suburban Winooski include many Vietnamese-immigrant seamstresses. His Bhutanese neighbors in his Colchester apartment complex are working hard, hunting for new work, moving up. ''In five years, they're looking to buy a house, some looking to buy a new car,'' he says.

Immigrants in Vermont have organized to help newer arrivals. The Association of Africans Living in Vermont, founded as a social circle, now offers workforce development and translation services to new refugees. Tuipate Mubiay, a Congolese immigrant who cofounded the group in 1999, also runs an orientation and a conversation partners program for refugee students at the Community College of Vermont.

''I feel Vermont has more open doors than other states,'' says Mubiay. Immigrants in the state tend to find jobs, apartments and health insurance faster than elsewhere, he says.

At the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program in Colchester, the state's only refugee placement agency, flyers on a lobby bulletin board offer refugees tips on jobs, health care and transportation: ''UPS is now hiring,'' ''Vermont Health Connect,'' ''Get a bike—Bike Recycle Vermont,'' ''And Remember, Please Give 15 Days Notice If You Are Quitting A Job.'' The Children's Book of America, edited by William J. Bennett, the Reagan administration secretary of education, rests on a coffee table, its cover illustration a bunch of kids from a kaleidoscope of ethnicities waving American flags.

Amila Merdzanovic, VRRP's director, came to Vermont in 1995 as a Bosnian refugee. She makes the case for resettlement's contributions to Vermont: It brings about 200 working adults a year to a state with a stagnant, aging population. ''We have employers calling us on a daily basis, saying, 'We need workers,' she says. Many refugees get jobs at hotels and restaurants. Landlords call, too, despite Burlington's low housing vacancy rate. ''Refugees are hyper-aware of the importance of good credit,'' she says. ''[They] take care of their apartments and their neighborhoods.''

It's hard to measure refugees' assimilation or happiness. Instead, agencies like VRRP look at self-sufficiency to measure success. Refugees get a one-time payment of $925 to $1,125 to start anew in the U.S. After that, the goal is to help them find a job that pays enough to make them ineligible for state aid. In 2015, Merdzanovic says, 75 percent of employable adults resettled in Vermont were self-sufficient within three months of arriving. By eight months, the figure rose to 88 percent.

''[If] we don't hear from them, we know they're working, their kids are in school, they're driving, they have a car and driver's license. That's a success,'' she says.

In Burlington, refugees' biggest challenge is affordable housing. Timsina, the Bhutanese grocer, says some refugees have moved to Ohio or Pennsylvania because of Burlington's high rents—at least $1,500 a month for a three-bedroom apartment. That's one reason Rutland appealed to VRRP.

But accepting Rutland's application to become a resettlement site for Syrians has exposed VRRP to something it hasn't dealt with elsewhere: angry opposition. ''It's very different,'' says Merdzanovic. ''It's new waters for all of us.''

As Rutland Mayor Chris Louras crosses a downtown street corner, an SUV pulls up. ''Hey, Louras!'' shouts the passenger.

''Mr. Congressman!'' says the mayor.

Peter Welch, Vermont's lone member of the House of Representatives, is the passenger, and he's not at all surprised to find the mayor giving an interview about his support for refugees. Welch is quick to say that he and Vermont's senators back Louras' effort.

''All three of us support accepting refugees in the country—America needs to do its share—but the real hard work is in the communities where people are going to land and live,'' Welch says.

It hasn't been easy, but Louras, an Army veteran who still sports a soldier's buzz cut, has a history of charging ahead. That's what Louras did last November, when Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin, a Democrat, announced that he, unlike several Republican governors, would continue to welcome Syrian refugees to his state.

''I saw that as an opportunity,'' Louras says, ''not just to do the right thing—to open our doors to a people who are fleeing for their lives—but also to do the right thing for the community.'' Louras says Syrian refugees could give Rutland a population boost and more cultural and ethnic diversity, which in turn could help the town attract and retain millennials.

''Our population is crashing,'' Louras says. Though Rutland is one of Vermont's largest cities, that doesn't mean it's very big. About 16,000 people live there, down from 19,000 in 1970. Louras, mayor for nine years, has worked to turn it around. He says downtown occupancy is at 95 percent, up from 75 percent when he started. But Rutland has been hit hard by the opioid epidemic and the subprime mortgage crisis. Absentee landlords have neglected their properties, leaving the city to step in with garbage pickup and grass-mowing. Refugees, he says, could revitalize the city's hardest-hit neighborhoods.

''In Burlington and Winooski, new Americans really take pride in where they live and become very engaged community members.'' Besides, he says, the town's economy needs workers: Unemployment is below 4 percent in Rutland County, and the region's top employers, Rutland Regional Medical Center and a GE aviation plant, have trouble finding new employees.

So, after talking with State Department and Homeland Security officials, VRRP, the local school district and major regional employers, Louras announced in April that Rutland would apply to welcome 100 refugees a year, starting with 100 Syrians. A supportive group, Rutland Welcomes, organized almost immediately to prepare for the Syrians' arrival. So did opposition.

''These are the same people or many of the same who danced in the street celebrating 9/11, the same people who hate us,'' read a change.org petition against the resettlement, with more than 400 supporters. Another group, Rutland First, also launched fierce criticisms of the refugee resettlement plan and hosted national anti-immigration speakers Philip Haney and James Simpson in September.

Some critics complained that Louras had acted secretly by not informing the city's board of aldermen. ''To keep it a big, fat, frickin' secret until it's too late obviously breeds mistrust,'' says Rutland City Treasurer Wendy Wilton.

In a July meeting, the aldermen narrowly rejected a petition to hold a nonbinding citywide referendum on refugee resettlement. Instead, they voted to send a letter to the State Department saying they weren't ready to endorse the idea.

''The last thing I wanted was for Rutland to be tarred [as] the community that voted on whether or not Muslims could be our neighbors,'' says Will Notte, president of the aldermen, who supports resettlement. ''We never voted on Italians coming. We didn't vote on the Poles. This is not something that is meant to be decided at the ballot box.''

Rutland alderman Scott Tommola, who voted to send the question to the ballot, says he's not opposed to taking in refugees. ''I've met very few who are adamantly opposed to this,'' Tommola says. ''The majority of people I talk to are cautiously optimistic.'' But he isn't convinced that the city has the jobs, housing and education capacity to take in 100 refugees a year. ''Show me these jobs and the housing that's adequate,'' he says.

In August, at a Rutland First meeting, Wilton claimed that taking in refugees will cause Rutland's property taxes to rise. She predicts they'll drive up English-language learning costs in local schools, and their housing needs will require the city to spend more on community development. ''It could be much more difficult than we think to help these folks,'' she says. Louras and others have disputed Wilton's figures. The mayor says taking in refugees won't cost City Hall a thing, and the schools superintendent says the district has excess capacity for teaching English.

Wilton, like Rutland First, says she isn't completely opposed to taking in refugees—maybe 25 a year would be OK, she says. But she's concerned that they'll take jobs from native Vermonters and that there aren't enough middle-class jobs in town to offer economic mobility. She also has security concerns about admitting Syrians to the U.S., citing intelligence concerns that ISIS can generate fake passports and may try to infiltrate the West through refugee flows. ''We're more than likely to end up, out of 10,000, 20,000 people, to have some folks here that don't have our best interests at heart,'' she says.

Louras says he's confident that the federal vetting process is solid: ''Individuals who want to do us harm are not going to come through refugee resettlement.''

In late September, the State Department approved Rutland as a new home for refugees. Louras says 75 Syrians from either the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan or camps in Lebanon, plus 25 Iraqis, should arrive in December or January.

Notte says he's confident that most Rutland residents support the refugees' arrival. He says meetings of Rutland Welcomes attract much larger audiences than resettlement's vocal opponents. The refugees' supporters have organized a furniture donation drive and begun holding free weekly Arabic lessons at the Unitarian Universalist Church.

''Vermont is desperately in need of young working people,'' Notte says. ''It's a match made in heaven.''

REMEMBERING DERMOT GALLAGHER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have come to this Chamber to pay tribute to Dermot Gallagher, an Irish diplomat and civil servant who I was deeply saddened to hear passed away on January 15, 2017, after a lifetime dedicated to public service.

Dermot Gallagher was a friend of the United States. His career overseas was bookended by tours here, having first been posted at the Irish consulate in San Francisco in 1971 before serving at the United Nations in New York, the Irish Embassy in London, with the European Commission in Brussels, as Irish Ambassador to Nigeria, and ultimately returning to the U.S. as the Irish Ambassador in Washington.

He is perhaps best known for his role in the Northern Ireland peace process. For decades, Dermot was involved in efforts to bring about peace and reconciliation. He was involved in the Sunningdale negotiations in 1973, implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in the late 1980s, and ultimately the negotiations and implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, when he used his ''emollient style of negotiation and diplomacy,'' as former junior minister and former Senator Martin Mansergh aptly described, to make significant contributions.

Dermot was also my friend. Over the course of his 6 years as Ambassador, my wife Marcelle and I came to know Dermot and his wife, Maeve, and I was fortunate to retain his friendship long after he returned to Ireland to advance the cause of peace.

I fondly recall our discussions about the relationship between the U.S., and particularly Vermont, and Ireland over dinner while he was Ambassador, visiting with him over a decade later when he had returned to Ireland and I visited on a trade mission, and the many conversations between about our families, our shared heritage, and our passion for U.S.-Ireland relations and the cause of peace.

I shared a personal memory in Ireland nearly 20 years ago that is worth sharing again because it speaks to who Dermot was as a person. While he was Ambassador, I was discussing my family's Irish ancestry, and I told him I wished my father, Howard Francis Leahy, had still been with us to know my family was planning a trip to Ireland. Dermot said to me, ''Pat, don't you think your father knows?'' It brought tears to my eyes. He was as personable and genuine as he was a skillful diplomat.

Perhaps his legacy has been best conveyed by the reaction of his former colleagues on learning of his passing, who described him as a ''gentleman,'' ''distinguished diplomat,'' and a ''brilliant, creative and warm human being.'' President Michael D. Higgins noted his significant contribution to the peace process. Minister for Foreign Affairs Charlie Flanagan lauded his ''talented service,'' marked by ''great loyalty and constant commitments.'' Prime Minister Enda Kenny described him as a ''patriot, an outstanding public servant who embodied the best of Ireland and its people.''

Dermot was all of these things, and he will be greatly missed, but affectionately remembered.

Marcelle and I send our deepest condolences to his wife, Maeve, and to their children, Fiona, Aoife, and Ronan.

TRIBUTE TO FATHER RAY DOHERTY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment today to honor Father Ray Doherty, a fellow Michaelman and a pillar of the St. Michael's College community. Father Ray, as he is warmly known, exemplifies so many of the qualities we Vermonters hold dear. His compassion and leadership have contributed to a vibrant college campus and has inspired those beyond its borders. As a member of the Society of Saint Edmund, whose members founded the college in 1904, Father Ray has embodied a commitment to social justice throughout his lifetime of service.

Father Ray first came to St. Michael's as a 17-year-old freshman. He spent his college years as both a student and an athlete, gracing the baseball program with his talents as pitcher before graduating in 1951. Father